

Planning Commission Written Comments- June 9, 2015

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & PARKING – TC1500003

BUZBY – I commend the staff for their hard and comprehensive proposal. While this is only one step, it is an important step to begin to address Durham’s affordable housing issues. I vote to approve this proposal.

DAVIS – Approve.

GIBBS – I approve sending this forward w/favorable recommendation.

HARRIS – Voted for approval.

HUFF - I agree both with staff and other commissioners who commented that though there are aspects of this text change that should be improved, the ordinance as written is at least a start and should go forward. I thank the staff for their hard work on a tough problem.

That said, I do not see much incentive in the 1:1 density bonus ratio allowed in suburban and urban tiers. The 3:1 ratio of the compact neighborhood tier is better but taking advantage of it looks to be complicated by building codes. The same complications are true of the height bonus since taller buildings are more expensive to build to code thus making the bonus less likely to be used. Several people suggested that the base density should be lowered to help make any bonus more attractive to builders. That idea seems worth exploring. Also it was said that bonuses less than 2:1 are historically not effective.

HYMAN – Favorable recommendation.

WINDERS – This text amendment is a good start, but only as a mull start, toward effective regulatory incentives for private investment in affordable housing. I am hopeful that the parking incentive will produce some affordable units for small households earning 50-60% of the AMI. The density incentive is less promising, because density limits are already very high.

The time restriction would ideally be 30 years, but I agree that we should start with a lower limit, with the idea of increasing it if the incentives succeed in producing affordable housing.

I would like to see the community’s concern for socioeconomic equity and diversity incorporated in to the definition/description of the Compact Neighborhood and in the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

We should think about adding affordable housing “provisions” as a condition for higher density allowed for the “with development plan” zones analogous to the “provisions” used with the building height regulation.